

REMARKS

Applicants have amended the claims to clarify the same and to remove the rejection based on 35 U.S.C. §112, second paragraph.

Applicants' main claim, Claim 1, as now amended, is to a three-dimensional ceramics structure which is one that is of solely ceramic material, obtained by baking an intermediate, comprising a three-dimensional fabric having continuous apertures and ceramics materials adhered to surfaces of yarns constituting the three-dimensional fabric, to eliminate organic components of the three-dimensional fabric, where the three-dimensional fabric has upper and lower fabric layers disposed apart at a certain distance and which have a plurality of apertures, and connecting yarns connecting the upper fabric layer with the lower fabric layer. This claimed structure is not taught or suggested in the references cited.

Claims 1, 3, 4, 6, 17 and 19-21 have been rejected as obvious under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) on the basis of a combination of Kataoka et al. (JP 2-14941) and Tokumitsu et al. (JP 4-45819). Reconsideration and removal of this rejection is respectfully requested in view of the present amendments to the claims and the following remarks.

As previously mentioned, the Kataoka et al. reference teaches a ceramic body that is made by impregnating a woven base of organic fibers with a ceramic slurry and firing the same to eliminate organic material from the ceramic body. As admitted in the Office Action, Kataoka does not teach or suggest a ceramic structure where connecting yarns connect layers of fabric together.

The Tokumitsu et al. reference is then cited to show a filter material where first and second knitted layers are held together by connecting yarns. It does not appear, however, that the reference discloses impregnation of the knit-goods by a ceramic material and firing the same to remove the knit-goods.

In the Response to Arguments section of the Office Action, the meaning of the term "certain distance" was questioned. Applicants have amended the claim to provide that the upper and lower fabric layers are "disposed apart at a certain distance," as clearly provided in the present specification and drawings.

Upon study of the two references, why would one be led to combine the two? Tokumitsu et al. discloses an air cleaning filter in which three-dimensional knit-goods serve as an air-permeable container-like structure for containing an adsorbent, such as activated carbon, in an air-permeable state. Therefore, in Tokumitsu et al., there is no technical idea of using a three-dimensional knit-goods as the starting structure for a three-dimensional ceramics structure. Further, since the three-dimensional knit-goods of Tokumitsu et al. serve as a container-like structure, it cannot be associated with the technical idea of eliminating the three-dimensional knit-goods by baking. In view of the foregoing, there is nothing to suggest combining Kataoka et al. with Tokumitsu et al.

The references themselves do not lead one to combine the two in an effort to allege obviousness of Applicants' claimed ceramics structure. The Tokumitsu et al. reference teaches the use of alumina as an absorbent 6 in cells 7 of a filter, not formation of a ceramic structure by immersion of a three-dimensional fabric in an alumina slurry and firing the same to remove organic

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components of the fabric to provide a three-dimensional structure of solely ceramic material, as called for in the present claims.

In view of the present amendments to the claims and the above remarks, Applicants' claims 1, 3, 4, 6, 17 and 19-21 are believed to be patentable over the cited references and early action towards allowance thereof is respectfully requested.

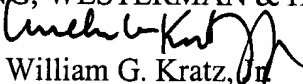
If, for any reason, it is felt that this application is not now in condition for allowance, the Examiner is requested to contact Applicants undersigned attorney at the telephone number indicated below to arrange for an interview to expedite the disposition of this case.

Attached hereto is a marked-up version of the changes made to the claims by the current amendment. The attached page is captioned "**Version with markings to show changes made.**"

In the event that this paper is not timely filed, Applicants respectfully petition for an appropriate extension of time. Please charge any fees for such an extension of time and any other fees which may be due with respect to this paper, to Deposit Account No. 01-2340.

Respectfully submitted,

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Enclosures: Version with markings to show changes made

H:\HOMENANCY\00\001573\AMENDMENT 2

IN THE CLAIMS:

Please amend Claims 1, 3, 4, 6, 17 and 19-21, as follows:

1. (Twice Amended) A [three-dimension] three-dimensional ceramics structure, comprising:

a [three-dimension] three-dimensional ceramics structure of solely ceramic material, obtained by baking an intermediate comprising a [three-dimension] three-dimensional fabric having continuous apertures and ceramics materials adhered to surfaces of yarns constituting said [three-dimension] three-dimensional fabric to eliminate organic components of said [three-dimension] three-dimensional fabric, wherein said [three-dimension] three-dimensional fabric comprises upper and lower fabric layers disposed apart at a certain distance and each having a plurality of apertures and connecting yarns connecting said upper fabric layer with said lower fabric layer.

3. (Twice Amended) The [three-dimension] three-dimensional ceramics structure as recited in claim 1, further comprising one or a plurality of fabric layers each having apertures and disposed between said upper fabric layer and said lower fabric layer.

4. (Twice Amended) The [three-dimension] three-dimensional ceramics structure as recited in claim 1, wherein high-performance material is adhered to a surface of said [three-dimension] three-dimensional ceramics structure.

6. (Twice Amended) The [three-dimension] three-dimensional ceramics structure as recited in claim 3, wherein high-performance material is adhered to a surface of said [three-dimension] three-dimensional ceramics structure.

17. (Twice Amended) A [three-dimension] three-dimensional ceramics structure, of solely ceramics material, comprising a [three-dimension] three-dimensional structure made of ceramics, wherein said structure comprises upper and lower layers disposed apart at a certain distance and an intermediate connecting layer connecting said upper layer with said lower layer.

19. (Twice Amended) The [three-dimension] three-dimensional ceramics structure as recited in claim [18] 17, further comprising one or a plurality of intermediate ceramics layers disposed between said upper and lower ceramics layers.

20. (Twice Amended) The [three-dimension] three-dimensional ceramics structure as recited in claim 17, wherein high-performance material is adhered to a surface of said ceramics structure.

21. (Amended) The [three-dimension] three-dimensional ceramics structure as recited in claim 20, wherein said high-performance material is catalyst or adsorbent.